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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Prairienet Computer and Internet Training Program

Jeff Ginger | LIS490CE – Community Engagement | Professor Ann Bishop | 12.17.2008

Libraries have historically played a critical role in providing a wide variety of informational, civic, and educational services to communities. In recent years with the mass adoption of the internet and other information communication technologies (ICT's) they have become increasingly responsible for providing citizens with computer and internet access as well as training, support, and technology-oriented education. Indeed, in small towns and inner city areas the library may in fact be one of the only places where reliable computing and technical information resources are to be found, especially for disadvantaged persons living in the area. Establishing relevant, diverse, and encouraging technology services in parallel to other traditional services is now key to the success of modern libraries.

As a result of the information age, other sites of public computing, beyond that of the library, have become commonplace. Community Technology Centers (CTC's for short) have taken up residence in community organizations, schools, living assisted homes, internet cafes and more. While all of these CTC's—libraries included—provide critical physical access to computers as well as the internet, they do not always offer adequate support and training for the use of these technologies. Disadvantaged patrons need to have the opportunity to develop a wide variety of skills required to participate in the modern workforce, understand and join virtual communities, and communicate digitally. One barrier to the acquisition of skills is the lack of free and widely available technology education. Community groups, librarians, and other CTC operators may not be able to offer classes or tutor patrons due to lack of time, funding, knowledge or other resources.

This is the role of the ***Prairienet Computer and Internet Training Program***. Historically, Prairienet has been a Community Networking Initiative, which means it has provided internet and computer services to local (state) community organizations in the form of computer labs, internet access (dial-up), email, listservs, technical support, community message boards and more. With Prairienet's recent merging into the research area of Community Informatics in the [Graduate School of Library and Information Science](#) at the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#) their objectives have been altered and revitalized.

Previously Prairienet provided computer training sessions to many of the local organizations—non-profits, churches, libraries, schools—around Illinois. Now they strive to serve community organizations anywhere in the nation, starting with emphasis on sites within the state.

**Prairienet's mission is largely unchanged. They still intend to:**

- Strengthen community organizations by helping them provide and retrieve on-line information
- Empower individuals by providing access to on-line information and by teaching individuals the skills necessary to access and use the information
- Facilitate information and resource sharing to support community development efforts
- Promote equal access to computers and the Internet for everyone in the community

The *Prairienet Computer and Internet Training Program* is a collection of resources and training guides intended to provide instructors and self-led learners at CTC's with the curriculum to teach and learn vital digital literacy skills.

## GOALS OF THIS PROGRAM

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- Provide educational support for **many types of learners**, including those just beginning to learn how to use computers all the way up to more seasoned persons who might need a refresher or update for new technologies
- Assist community members in developing **essential digital literacy skills**, including:
  - The basic terms related to computers and the internet
  - How to use a mouse and keyboard
  - Operate the basic functions of modern computer operating systems
  - Design documents and presentations
  - Navigate and search the Internet
  - Send and receive email
  - And many more advanced tasks like using special programs and internet applications as well as upgrading computer hardware
- Help **empower community members to solve individual and community problems** through use of these skills, especially in the realms of civic engagement, environmentalism, citizen journalism, political action, entrepreneurship and more
- Educate users to not only know how to operate computer and internet technology tools but also **critique and redesign** them to make them relevant to their individual and community needs
- Encourage **active learning** through the use of exercises and opportunities to teach and share learning experiences with friends, family and other peers
- Invite learners to **become part of the Prairienet community** and to add their own interests, perspectives, and talents to our development efforts

## IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS PROGRAM

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- It is viable for computer labs built and operated in the current decade, approximately 2002-2012, the lifespan of Windows XP and the emergence period of Vista, OSX, and easy-to-use open source operating systems Linux such as Ubuntu
- The program is modular. It is broken down into three main units: **computer basics, basic applications and advanced learning**. Each of these units includes lessons that can be arranged to suit the individual technology and skills-related needs of a given learner. At this time we have gathered training guides and support resources for several operating systems, including **Windows XP** and **Vista** as well as **Ubuntu Linux**. We also have guides for Open Office, Microsoft Office XP/2003/2007 and some advanced learning materials for the previously mentioned operating systems.
- In time we also hope add guides for advanced **internet activities**, such as:
  - How to set up and use a Gmail account as well as learn the basic do's and don'ts of email
  - Use the Google suite to accomplish many types of tasks - organize a digital calendar, find places and map routes on Google maps, get important and customized news with feeds and make basic websites
  - Use Web2.0 sites like Wikipedia, YouTube, Flickr and Facebook for creating and sharing information and media
  - Buy and sell items online
  - Search for jobs and post a resume
  - Find high-quality trustworthy research resources for school
- At this time the guides are not available in a single print or paper format. We invite you to print them out to make personalized packets and plan to introduce an easy way to do so in the future.
- If you would like to help to revise or write tutorials you can access all of the content through use of our wiki, located at <http://www.jag-wire.net/wiki>

## INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTORS

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This training program is designed to fit your needs as an instructor. You can fit together chapters that relate to your community's needs and interests to form your own program. Each section will have information to read about, tutorials to follow, links to websites on related topics, and exercises to help you practice what you've learned.

- Before you begin you may want to think about some of the assets around your community that could aid you in establishing and/or conducting training. You should also give some thought to the logistics of your own operation:
- What is the size of your community, specifically those who will be involved in training? Will you do classes or just one-on-one tutoring?
- What people are available to help with the work? Would some of the trainees be interested after they complete the program?
- How much time do you have for the given lessons? Will they fit easily into an hour or longer? Should you split them up with breaks or multiple sessions?
- How much money is at your disposal? Will there be any printing costs or will you need to buy any hardware or software to conduct training?
- And finally, do you plan to measure or evaluate your results? Will you do this by the number of people who take part in training, or by how they feel about what they've learned? Is there any way to record their experience to ensure we can learn from it?

Think about some of these items and integrate the answers into your method.

## CURRENT AUDIENCES

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The **basic training sections** were designed with a few key audiences in mind:

- Seniors and the elderly
- Refugees and immigrants
- War veterans
- Homeless individuals
- Other individuals who have grown up without a chance to be exposed to computers or the internet

Some sections will need to be adjusted depending on community needs. For instance, refugees will probably not be able to read English as well and may need assistance from an instructor translating terms. Other people may not be interested in or able to sit through an entire tutorial session at one time—they can be broken up as required.

## INFORMATION FOR LIS490CE

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For reference, I have provided answers to the contact questions.

### ASK

How can I revise and recreate the Prairinet Basic Training Manual to be not only useful but empowering?

In what ways might the book be better organized and what new sections might be added to reflect changing community needs, new social norms and available technologies? What can I learn about the communities who will use this book to make it more effective?

I did not have a chance to answer my final question—How can this training manual be best published and proliferated on the web? I do plan to test the manual with a few CI partner sites next semester. Once it has been finished and revised I will look into wider methods of distribution.

### INVESTIGATE

I didn't really need to consult many journal or research sources for this project. Instead I used a number of websites, including the Microsoft How-To guides, the Gnome (Ubuntu) documentation, and other free training resources. I also employed a number of software tools, such as Snag-It 8, Microsoft Virtual PC 2007, Windows Vista Movie Maker and Adobe Fireworks CS4 for the capturing of pictures and video. I employ my own means to publish information (personal server and website authoring tools) and created my own wiki and website for the project.

This project wasn't the sort of thing you can learn how to do through reading about it in a book or learning it from a teacher in a traditional class. All of my knowledge about computers or the internet has been amassed from experience playing and working with these things for many years. My ability to write curriculum and teach was from leadership with student organizations and as a TA in Sociology (and is probably the element that could use the most revision).

### CREATE

Paul Adams and I met intermittently throughout the semester to talk about the project development. He and I plan to continue working together on the project next semester through an independent study with Martin Wolske.

I will be testing the manual with several populations:

- Rantoul and Mahomet public libraries
- Veterans through ESLARP
- Americorps VISTAS refugee services in Minnesota
- A couple of personal contacts

It will be available online, linked from [www.communityinformaticsprojects.com](http://www.communityinformaticsprojects.com).

### DISCUSS AND REFLECT

This information will be included in my Reflection Paper, turned in separately.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Community Engagement Documentary Video

Jeff Ginger | LIS490CE – Community Engagement | Professor Ann Bishop | 12.17.2008

This project consisted of a series of videos collected over the course of the fall semester of 2008. They captured elements of the different community engagement projects taken on by students in Ann Bishop's LIS490CE class. These videos were meshed together in order to both inform and showcase—each video included information about:

- The students conducting the project
- The history of the community organization or partner
- What drew the students to the project and what they found interesting
- Some shots of what the students actually did during their project
- The relationship it has to library science and/or community informatics
- How future volunteers might pick up where they left off or get involved

This information was then woven together and given an introduction with information about the Graduate School of Library Science and Community Informatics Initiative at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The entire piece was produced, planned, filmed, narrated, and revised, edited and touched up with effects by Jeff Ginger.

While the same set of information was collected about each project some parts were cut and otherwise curtailed. The raw video footage will be made available for each community group for future use and the final videos will be available online in both long format at [www.communityinformaticspjjects.com](http://www.communityinformaticspjjects.com) and short format on YouTube under user Geph85 and CommunityInformatics. They will also be available on the Community Informatics Multimedia Archive (CIMA).

## INFORMATION FOR LIS490CE

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For reference, I have provided answers to the contact questions.

### ASK

What are students doing for their community engagement projects? Why did they choose what they did? How does all of this connect to service learning or participatory action research? How does it fit into the broad scope of community informatics?

### INVESTIGATE

I didn't have any print resources or research for this project. I used my combined experience with multimedia, journalism and leadership and a number of software programs to learn how to make the video. I conferred a little bit with friends and checked with each group for feedback (if I could get to them) before releasing the final. To be honest this project was based purely on self-led learning and the type of thing that isn't taught in traditional classes in school. Education hasn't caught up to digital literacy needs yet, at the time I was an undergraduate they didn't offer classes like "Writing with video." We are only now beginning to see integrative technology-literacy education courses and only sparingly. Other skills, like how to think, how to ask questions and how to tell a story come from a number of course, media-related and life experiences.

My software resources consisted of Adobe Premiere CS4 (85% of the work), Quicktime Pro 7.5 (clip review), Windows Vista Movie Maker (credits), Sony SoundForge 8.0 (sound editing), and music from X-Ray Dog the X-Specs CD. I used my little Panasonic camera to capture all of the footage and audio.

It is also worth mentioning that I'm blessed with a very fast desktop computer with two displays. If another student wanted to do this kind of editing they would also need a powerful setup, otherwise it would probably take them much longer.

### CREATE

I met with several groups from the class as well as community partners to capture footage each week with a series of interviews and action filming sessions. I took a little time between captures to consider how to interlace footage with music and make sure I had enough material to work with. The bulk of the project took place during roughly 36 hours of arranging, editing, revising, effects and processing time, plus time spent waiting on exports all done the week before the video was due. I spent around 2 hours of fieldwork time per group capturing material. The final product is 28 minutes long and I still have to get to the blooper reel.

### DISCUSS AND REFLECT

See the reflection paper.